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Golf

By

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Golf *for the* Beginner

By
George Fitch

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P R E F A C E

HUTCHINSON, *Vardon*, *Taylor*, and *Travis* have written fine long books about golf for players. But the question arises, Do these works really tell the utter novice anything about the game? There seems to exist a demand for a book on the subject as simple and explicit as "*This Little Pig Went to Market*"—one that can not be misunderstood and that will not be thrown aside because it is too technical. The writer saw the need before he became a confirmed "golfer." Briefly, he meets it with this little book.

GOLF *for the* BEGINNER

GOLF, to the timid man who has mowed a large field with a dull club for the first time, is an overgrown game of hide-and-seek which is played in a reformed cow pasture with clubs and a vocabulary. A golf course consists of eighteen four-and-a-half-inch holes of the best quality, carefully concealed about a one-hundred-and-eighty-acre field. The object of the game is to put an undersized rubber ball into each of the holes in succession without breaking a blood-vessel. Kicking out the ball or attacking it with a knife is forbidden. One

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must do the trick solely by striking it with the club, counting each stroke doggedly and in a rich, redolent undertone.

THE clubs which are used in herding the ball over the course are many in number. There is the driver, which is used for driving the small rubber tee into the ground; the loftier, which raises small chunks of sod over trees, bunkers, and other obstructions; the cleek, for weed-clipping; the niblick, for throwing sand at an adversary; the mashie, for pounding the ball into the

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*“Golf . . . is an overgrown game
of hide and seek.”*

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earth, and the midiron for punishing it until its maker wouldn't recognize its battered shell. Other useful clubs are the brassie, the putter, the excavator, the whacker, the digger, the smasher, the chopper, and the caddie driver. The latter is a common club, not turned up at the end, and is used to keep the caddie awake. A caddie is a parody on a small boy, who carries the clubs and helps to lose the ball. Expert golfists can drive both a ball and a caddie over the course at the same time without help.

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ALL of these clubs are finely made, most of them with iron heads, fitted to lithe hickory handles. They are excellent for beating carpets, doing light garden digging, mowing weed patches, killing chickens, and repelling burglars. It is a point of honor with a golfer, however, to use them only upon the golf course where their limitations are pathetic. A golfer will spend half an hour digging up a small patch of ground with his clubs when he could have done it in two minutes with a spade.

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OTH^{ER} instruments which are very useful in playing the game are a long, slim-waisted bag, with a handle, for carrying clubs, cash registers at each tee for tabulating the strokes, a pair of hip boots for pursuing the quarry into the water, a rake, a scythe, a red flag to stick beside your ball so that it will not crawl away when you take your eye off of it, and a funnel to assist in chasing the ball into the hole. Extra balls are most conveniently carried in a small push-cart. You can do without some of these articles possibly, but not without great

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inconvenience. It never pays to skimp while playing golf.

THE rules of the game are very simple. You must hit the ball with your club. After you have hit it you must find it, of course, before you hit it again. It will take you several weeks to master these two rules. After driving the ball you must hit it wherever it lies. Good lies are as important in golf as in fishing. Losing a ball costs you two strokes and fifty cents. Hitting a caddie with the ball is justifiable homicide.

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*“After you have hit it you
must find it.”*

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PREPARING a golf course is a difficult and expensive task. In the first place, one must have a field in which the face of nature is considerably wrinkled. The wrinkles help to conceal the holes. In case they are not present, they must be supplied by building miniature mountain ridges and scooping out ravines. A little water on the course adds much to the interest of the game. By driving his ball into a pond occasionally, the golfer keeps it clean. Having distributed the eighteen holes judiciously so as to keep them so far apart that the

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first stroke leaves the ball three hundred yards short and yet so near that the last stroke puts it fifty yards beyond the hole, the expert will add a nineteenth hole. This should be large enough to hold several hundred golfists and enough high balls to go around several times.

THE course proper consists of two greens — the fair green and the putting green. Most of the playing between holes is supposed to be done on the fair green, which is kept nicely mown and turfed. Muscular novices, playing on the fair

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green, have been known to knock sections of the turf one hundred yards at one stroke. A novice, if he chose, could frequently hole a piece of turf in three or four strokes; but, absurdly, the rules oblige him to cling to the ball and take the regulation thirteen every time.

THE putting green surrounds the hole. It is smooth and covered with velvety grass and is a beautiful place on which to lie down and die after you have played "ring-around-the-hole" with your ball for a few minutes.

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EVEN when a golf course is erected as prescribed above, it is by no means complete. The most costly work is yet to come. It must be seeded down with golf balls. This is a job which can not be done by mere hirelings; neither can it be done in a day. It takes at least a month of hard, devoted work by the whole membership.

As every one knows, it is no trick at all to lose a small rubber ball in a quarter section — particularly when it has lost the first bloom of youth. A mere child can do it. An amateur can go

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*“The niblick, for throwing sand
at an adversary.”*

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out and lose \$3.50 worth of balls without even working up a perspiration. In fact, most of the beginner's time is spent in poking around the grass, trying to find the ball which he has just succeeded in hitting with a club. This makes golf discouraging at first and leads sarcastic people to hint that it is best played by a retriever pup.

THE new golf course is especially well equipped for receiving balls and not giving them up. Day after day you will go blithely out, your bag stuffed with small rubber pellets, and return

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discouraged, after a weary afternoon of hunting, with no balls at all. However, in a month or so a new condition will arise. You may not find your own ball, but you will find the ball that some other golfer lost yesterday. In other words, there will be so many lost balls on the course that you will always be finding either the ball you lost to-day or the ball you lost yesterday, or some one else's ball. From this time on all will be lovely. A golf ball circulation having been established, it will only be necessary to buy new balls when the old

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ones wear out—provided that each player turns his caddie upside down and shakes him before leaving the course.

THERE are more rules to worry the golfist than there are laws to trouble the trust magnate, and the novice will find a book of rules very handy in his playing. It can easily be carried about the course by an extra caddie. Here are a few which, memorized, will be helpful to the beginner in his work:

1. It is not necessary to remove the hat while addressing the ball.

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2. After driving, be careful to remove fragments of the club which might interfere with the next man's play.

3. In hunting for a ball lay down a club where you think it should be. When you have found the ball lay it down where you think the club should be.

4. A player lofting a piece of turf more than fifty yards shall have the right to play it for the ball.

5. The use of American expletives on a golf course is not considered good form. Learn the names of ten Scottish champions and pro-

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*“For the beginner the hole should be
the size of a cistern with a
concave putting green.”*

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nounce them rapidly when
you foozle.

GOLF is full of benefits to the player, and he who plays the game faithfully is developed in several ways. In driving at the ball the muscles are developed. In missing it the lungs are developed. In hunting for it after you have hit it the eyesight is made wonderfully acute. After a man has played golf for three months he can beat a carpet all morning if allowed to count the strokes; he can find a collar button; and, when necessary, he can outargue a hack

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driver and make him apologize for his poor command of language. That's what golf does for a man!

GOLF has been made the object of earnest study for several centuries, and one might reasonably suppose that it had been made perfect during this time. This is not so, however. It still has faults. It is too rigid and unelastic in its requirements—particularly with regard to the size of the holes. It is foolish to compel the beginner to locate holes of the same size as those the professional uses. It discourages him at

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the outset and embitters him against the game. A camel could leap jauntily through the eye of a needle much more easily than a rich man can put a small, bouncy ball in a four-and-a-half-inch hole in his first attempt at golf. The present size is all very well for the professional and for the amateur who blames the national constitution when he takes five for a hole and who will not speak to a man who says "sticks" instead of "clubs." Some concession, however, should be made for novices; they should not be compelled to hunt for both balls and holes. For the av-

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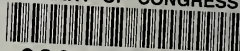
erage player a hole the size of a washtub would make the game much more exciting. For the beginner the hole should be the size of a cistern with a concave putting green. For such a player as myself the course should be *all hole*, with eighteen driving grounds sticking out of it like an archipelago. With such a course as this I could easily make the rounds in sixty strokes—my average number of misses for each drive being two and a fraction. A match between Vardon and myself, he on his course and I on mine, would be interesting.

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